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THE
HISTORY
OF
Thomas Hickathrift.

PART the FIRST.



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The First Part of
Thomas Hickathrift

CHAP. I.

Tom's Birth and Parentage.

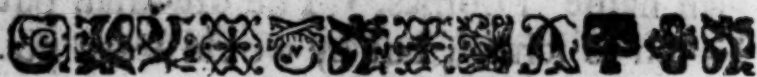
IN the reign of William the Conqueror, I have read in antient records, there lived in the Isle of Ely in Cambridge-shire, a man named Thomas Hickathrift, a poor labourer, yet he was an honest stout man, and able to do as much work in a day as two ordinary men. Having only one son, he called him after his

own name Thomas. The old man put his son to school, but he would learn nothing.

God called the old man aside, his Mother being tender of her son, maintained him by her own labour as well as she could; but all his delight was in the chimney corner, and he eat as much at once as would serve five ordinary men. At ten years old he was six feet high, and three in thickness; his hand was like a shoulder of mutton, and every other part proportionable; but his great strength was yet unknown.



CHAP.



C H A P. II.

How Tom Hickathrift's great Strength
came to be known.



TOM's Mother being a poor widow, went to a rich farmer's house, to beg a bundle of straw, to shift herself and her son Thomas. The farmer, being an honest charitable man, bid her take what she wanted. She going home to her son Thomas, said, Pray go to such a place, and fetch me a bundle of straw; I have asked leave.—He swore he would not go.—Nay, prithy go, said his poor old mother.—Again he swore he would not,

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unless she would borrow him a cart rope. She being willing to pleasure him, went and borrowed one.

Then taking the cart-rope, away he went, and coming to the farmer's house, the master was in the barn, and two men threshing.

Tom said, I am come for a burden of straw. Tom, said the farmer, take as much as thou can'st carry. So he laid down his cart-rope, and began to make up his burden.

Your rope, Tom, said they is too short, and jeered him. But he fitted the farmer well for his joke; for when he had made up his burthen, it was supposed it might be two thousand weight. — But says they, what a fool art thou? for thou can'st not carry the tythe of it. — But however he took up his burthen, and shode no more of it than we do an hundred pound weight, to the great admiration of master and men.

Now Tom's strength begining to be known in the town, they would not let him lie basking in the chimney corner, every one hirring him to work, seeing he had so much strength, all telling him, It

was a shame for him to lie idle as he did from day to day ; so that Tom finding them bate at him as they did, went first to one work, and then to another.

At last a man came to him, and desired him to go with him to the wood to help him bring a tree home ; so Tom went with him and four othe men.

And when they came to the wood, they set the cart by the tree, and began to draw it by pullies ; but Tom seeing them not able to stir it, said aloud, stand aside fools—And set it on one end, and then put it in tothe cart — There, said he, see what a man can do? — Marry said they, that's true.



Having done, and come through the wood they met the woodman ; and Tom

asked him for a stick to make his mother a fire with.

Aye, said the woodman, take one.

So Tom took up a tree bigger than that on the cart, and put it on his shoulder, and walked home with it faster than the six horses in the cart drew the other.

This was the second instance of Tom's shewing his strength; by which time he began to know that he had more natural strength than twenty common men; and from this time Tom began to grow very tractable; he would jump, run, and take



delight in young company, and go to fairs and meetings, to see sports and diversions.

One day going to the wake, where the young men were met, some went to wrestling, and some to cudgels, some to throwing the hammer, and the like.

Tom stood awhile to see the sport, and at last he joined the company, throwing the hammer; at length he took the ham-



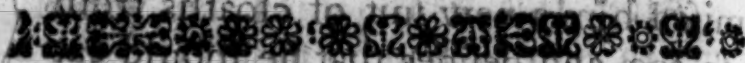
mer in his hand, and felt the weight of it, bidding them stand out of the way, for he would try how far he could throw it.—Aye, said the old smith, you will throw it a great way I warrant you.

Tom took the hammer, and giving it a swing, threw it into a river five or six furlongs distant, and bid them fetch it out.

After this Tom joined the wrestle and though he had no more skill than a ass, yet by main strength he flung all he grappled with; if once he laid hold they were gone; some he threw over his head, and others he laid down gently. He did not attempt to lock or strike at their heels, but threw them down two or three yards from him, and sometimes on their heads, ready to break their necks. So that at last none durst enter the ring to wrestle with him; for they took him to be some devil among them.

Thus was the fame of Tom's great strength spread more and more about the country.





C H A P. III.

Tom becomes a Brewers Servant; and of
his killing a Giant, and gaining the
Title of Mr. Hickathrift.



TOM's fame being spread, no one
durst give him an angry word; for
being fool-hardy, he cared not what he
did; so that those who knew him would
not displease him. At last a brewer of
Lynn, who wanted a lusty man to carry
beer to the Marsh, and to Wisbeach,
hearing of Tom, came to hire him; but
Tom would not hire himself, until his

friends persuaded him, and the master promised him a new suit of cloaths from top to toe, and besides that he should eat and drink of the best. At last Tom consented to be his man, and the master shewed him which way he was to go; for there was a monstrous Giant, who kept part of the Marsh, and none durst go that way; for if the Giant found them, he would either kill them, or make them his slaves.

But to come to Tom and his master: Tom did more in one day, than all the rest of his men did in three; so that his master seeing him so tractable, and careful in his business, made him his head man, and trusted him to carry beer by himself, for he needed none to help him. Thus Tom went each day to Wisbeach, which was a long Journey of twenty miles.

Tom going this journey so often, and finding the other road, the Giant kept, nearer by the half, and Tom having increased his strength by being so well kept, and improved his courage by drinking so much strong ale; one day as he was going to Wisbeach, without saying

any thing to his master, or any of his fellow servants, he resolved to make the nearest road, or lose his life; to win the horse, or lose the saddle; to kill or be killed if he met the Giant.

Thus resolved, he goes the nearest way with his cart, flinging open the gates in order to go through; but the Giants soon espied him, and seeing him a daring fellow, vowed to stop his journey, and make a prize of his beer: but Tom cared not a farthing for him; and the Giant met him like a roaring lion, as though he would have swallowed him.

Sirrah, said he, who gave you authority to come this way? Do you not know that I make all stand in fear of my sight? and you like an impudent rogue, must come and fling open my gates at pleasure. Are you so careless of your life, that you do not care what you do? I'll make you an example to all rogues under the sun. Dost thou not see how many heads hang on yonder tree, that have offended my laws? thine shall hang above them all.

A turd in your teeth, said Tom, you shall not find me like one of them. No

said the Giant, why you are but a fool, if you come to fight me, and bring no weapon to defend yourself. Cries Tom I have got a weapon here shall make you know I am your master. Aye; say you so, firrah, said the Giant, and then ran to his cave to fetch his club, intending to dash out his brains at one blow.



While the Giant was gone for his club Tom turned his cart upside down, taking the axle-tree and wheel for his sword and buckler, and excellent weapons they was on such an emergence.

The Giant coming out again began to stare at Tom to see him take the wheel in one hand, and the axle-tree in the other.

Oh ! Oh ! said the Giant, you are like to do great things with these instruments ; I have a twig here that will bear thee, and thy axle-tree and thy wheel to the ground.



Now that which the giant called a twig was as thick as a mill-post ; with this the Giant made a blow at Tom with such a force as made his wheel crack. Tom nothing daunted, gave him as brave a blow on the side of his head, which made him reel again. — What, said Tom, are you got drunk with my small beer already ? — The Giant, recovering, made many hard blows at Tom ; but still, as they came, he kept them off with his wheel, so that he received but very little hurt.

In the mean time Tom plied him so well with blows, that the sweat and blood ran together down the Giant's face; who being fat and foggy, was almost spent with fighting so long, begged Tom to let him drink, and then he would fight him again. No said Tom, my mother did not teach me such wit; who is fool then? whereupon finding the Giant grow weak, Tom redoubled his blows till he brought him to the ground. The Giant finding himself overcome, roared hediously, and begged Tom to spare his life, and he would perform any thing he should desire, even yield himself unto him, and be his servant.

But Tom having no more mercy on him than a bear upon a dog, laid on him till he found him breathless, and then cut off his head, after which he went into the cave and there found great store of gold and silver, which made his heart leap for Joy.

When he had rumaged the cave, and refreshed himself a little, he restored the wheel and axle-tree to their former places, and loaded his beer on his cart, and went to Wisbeach, where he delivered his beer

and returned home the same night as usual.

Upon his return to his master, he told him what he had done, which though he was rejoiced to hear, he could not altogether believe, till he had seen if it were true. Next morning Tom's master went with him to the place, to be convinced of the truth; as did most of the inhabitants of Lynn. When they came to the place they were rejoiced to find the giant dead; and when Tom shewed them the head, and what gold and silver there was in the cave, all of them leaped for joy; for the giant had been a great enemy to that part of the country.

News was soon spread that Thomas Hickathrift had killed the giant, and happy was he that could come to see the giant's cave; and bonfires were made all round the country for Tom's success.

Tom, by the general consent of the country took possession of the giant's cave, and the riches. He pulled down the cave, and built himself a handsome house on the spot. Part of the Giant's lands he gave to the poor for their common, and the rest he divided and enclosed for an estate

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to maintain him and his mother. Now Tom's fame spread more and more thro' the country, and he was no longer called plain Tom, but Mr. Hickathrift; and they feared his anger now almost as much as they did that of the Giant before.

Tom now finding himself very rich, resolved his neighbours should be the better for it; he inclosed himself a park, and kept deer; and just by his house he built a church, which he dedicated to St. James, because on that Saint's day he killed the Giant.





C H A P I V.

How Tom kept a Pack of Hounds, and of his being attacked by four Highwayman.



TOM not being used to have such a stock of riches, could hardly tell how to dispose of it ; but he used means to do it, for he kept a pack of hounds, and men to hunt them ; and who but Tom ! he took such delight in sports and exercises, that he would go far and near to a merry meeting.

One day as Tom was riding, he saw a company at football, and dismounted to see them play for a wager ; but he spoiled

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all their sport, for meeting the football, he gave it such a kick that they never found it more ; whereupon they began to quarrel with Tom, but some of them got little good by it ; for he got a spar, which belonged to an old house that had been blown down, with which he drove all opposition before him, and made way wherever he came.



After this, going home late in the evening, he was met by four highwaymen well mounted, who had robbed all the passengers that travelled this road. When they saw Tom, and found that he was alone, they were cock sure of his money, and bid him stand and deliver. — What must I deliver, cries Tom ? — Your money, firrah, says they. — Aye, said Tom,

but you shall give me better words for it first, and be better armed too.—Come, come, said they, we came not here to prate; but for your money, and Money we will have before we go. Is it so, said Tom, then get it and take it.



Whereupon one of them made at him with a trusty sword, which Tom immediately wrenched out of his hand, and attacked the whole four with it, and made them set spurs to their horses; but seeing one had a portmantua behind him, and supposing it contained money, he more closely pursued them, and soon overtook them, and cut their journey short, killing two of them, and sadly wounding the other two, who begging hard for their lives, he let them go, but took away all

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their money, which was above two hundred pounds, to bear his expences home.

When Tom came home, he told them how he had served the poor foot-ball players; and also related his engagement with the four thieves; which produced much laughter amongst the whole company.



CHAP.



C H A P. V.

Tom meets with a Tinker, and of the
Battle they fought.



SOME time afterwards, as Tom was walking about his estate, to see how his workmen went on, he met upon the skirts of the forest, a very sturdy Tinker having a good staff on his shoulder, and a great dog to carry his budget of tools. So Tom asked the Tinker from whence he came, and whither he was going? that was no highway. And the Tinker being a very sturdy fellow, bid him look, what was that to him? but for must alway be meddling. — Hold, for

Tom, before you and I part I will make you know who I am.—Aye, said the Tinker, it is three [years since I had a combat with any man ; I have challenged many a one, but none dare face me, so I think they are all cowards in this part of the country ; but I hear there is a man lives hereabouts, named Thomas Hickathrift, who has killed a Giant ; him I'd willingly see to have a bout with.—Aye, said Tom, I am the man, what have you to say to me ? — Truly, said the Tinker, I am glad we are so happily met, that we may have one touch. — Surely, said Tom you are but in jest. — Marry, said the Tinker, I am in earnest.—A match, said Tom. — It is done, said the Tinker. —But said Tom will you give me leave to let me get a twig. ——— Aye, said the Tinker, I hate him that fights with a man unarmed. *He did not last long of giving* So Tom stepped to a gate, and took a rail for a staff. To it they fell, the Tinker at Tom and Tom at the Tinker, like two Giants. The Tinker had a leather coat on, so that every blow Tom gave him made him roar again : yet the Tinker did not give way an inch, till Tom gave

him such a bang on the side of the head as felled him to the ground. — Now Tinker, where art thou? said Tom. — But the Tinker being a nimble fellow, leaped up again, and gave Tom a bang, which made him reel, and following his blows, took Tom on the other side, which made him throw down his weapon, and yield the Tinker the best of it.

After this Tom took the Tinker home to his house, where we shall leave them to improve their acquaintance, and get themselves cured of the bruises they gave each other.

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